

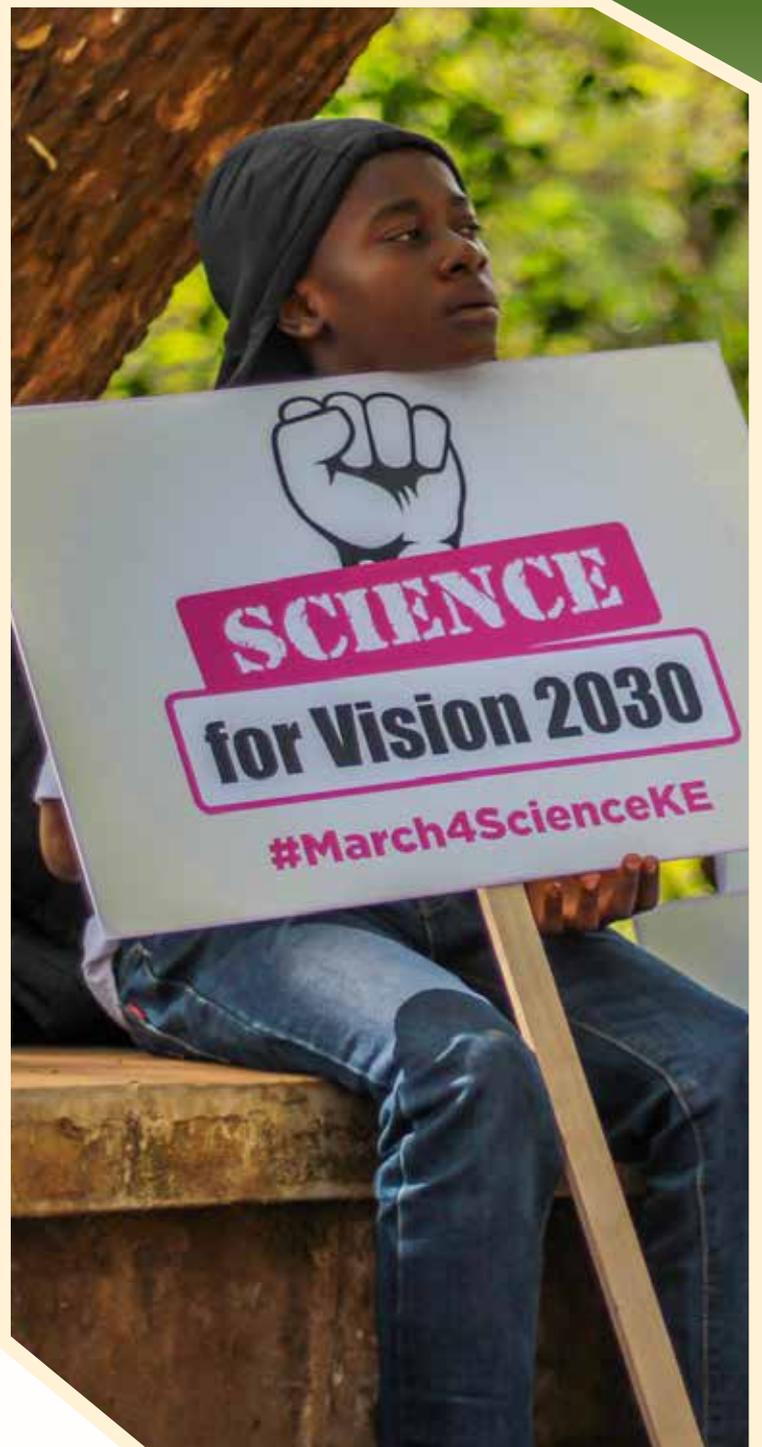
Policy Environment and Public Participation

PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

Agriculture is Sub-Saharan Africa's most important sector, employing more people and contributing more to the region's economy than any other industry. Innovation and technology can play a major role if African countries are to realise their potential in agriculture. Farmers in Sub-Saharan Africa have generally shown a willingness to adopt innovative technologies, particularly those that enable them to overcome their existing constraints.

Innovation and technology can play a major role if African countries are to realise their potential in agriculture. There are new technologies with the potential to drive transformation in the sector that have not reached farmers due to a lack of enabling policy, legal and regulatory environments that promote innovation.

It is vital to create these enabling environments by giving policymakers the information they need to make informed decisions about the regulation of agricultural technology, and to help them to formulate regulations and support structures that promote innovation. Countries that are able to create conducive climates for innovation and business growth will be able to attract investment and drive the development of their agriculture sectors and their wider economies.



Our contribution

AATF believes that innovation and technology will be a key component of Africa's agricultural transformation, and will have a significant and positive effect on the lives of smallholders. We work to proactively address the policy and regulatory obstacles in the way of access to technology for all stakeholders in the agricultural value chain, from research to production, to processing and market linkages.

Our interventions touch on all aspects of innovation, including support for intellectual property rights, advocacy on policy and regulation, stewardship of technology, communications and public affairs, and the actual deployment of products to the end user—the farmers.

We strive to create the support at all levels of political leadership and farming communities for the availability and adoption of agricultural innovation. To achieve this, we have aligned ourselves with key African institutions, including the African Union, as well as with governments, state and non-state actors to champion the creation of functional policy and regulatory environments and effective institutions. We promote dialogues on science, technology and innovation, including education and awareness-building so that all stakeholders, from policymakers to farmers, can make informed decisions about new technologies.

Current projects and special initiatives



Enhancing/building stakeholder understanding of biotechnology

The adoption of innovations in biotechnology is often hampered by misconceptions about the potential risks. The Open Forum on Agricultural Biotechnology in Africa (OFAB) seeks to address these by facilitating the flow of credible information from the scientific community to policymakers and the public through advocacy and communication campaigns. It promotes constructive conversations among the key stakeholders in the field, from civil society organisations and journalists through to farmers, investors, regulators and policymakers. OFAB is currently being implemented in seven countries—Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Nigeria, Ghana, Burkina Faso and Ethiopia.



Improving the environment for seed supply systems

A key challenge to availability of modern, high-quality seeds is under-performing agro inputs markets that impede growth of the seed supply market. AATF is addressing this challenge by supporting governments in Eastern, Southern and Western Africa to implement national regulatory reforms governing quality seed supply systems. This will help create an enabling business environment that will encourage commercialisation and availability of agricultural inputs.



Improving uptake and use of improved seed

One of the most significant challenges for African farmers is access to and use of improved seed. Through the Enabling Policies for Technology Adoption Project, AATF aims to increase the proportion of African farmers using improved seeds from 30 percent to 60 percent within the next decade, by creating a strong supply chain, increasing the access and availability of quality seeds, and harmonising regional policies on the registration and distribution of new seeds.



Building a regional consensus on biopesticides and bio-control approaches

There are concerns in several African countries about the crop infection and contamination of food grains with aflatoxin, a poisonous toxin resulting from fungal pests. AATF has been working with the relevant stakeholders to develop a 'guidance document' for the registration of biopesticides that could be used to control the contamination. This initiative includes providing regulatory laboratories with sampling and testing equipment, and building the capacity of government ministries and the private sector to address food safety. We have also worked with public and private partners to help them comply with international trade standards, to assist them with their access to global markets, in particular through the US' African Growth and Opportunity Act.